

Presidents as Perfect Detonators:

The Deterrent Threat of Omnicide

(Already, 1960:  
Nuc Winter)

Someday, if we survive the 1960's, the era might arrive that the proponents of the Balance of Terror celebrate prematurely: the world in which the best-planned and executed nuclear ~~surprise~~ attack would be, literally, suicidal. (FS = 2nd S?)

Deliberately to choose to attack would, in that world, be insane. For that reason, there is a widely-held belief that blackmail would vanish along with total war. The same should apply, if at all, in a world where people think that nuclear war must be suicidal; and for some (NATO) it is. Arthur Lee Burns, in an analytical article in World Politics, expressed this two years ago in a very suggestive metaphor. "By transforming major war into mutual mass-destruction," he said, the new weapons "rule out that threat of it against which, as bank-deposit, all the paper of historic diplomacy has been issued."<sup>1</sup>

As we are aware, a good deal of paper threatening mutual destruction is still being passed, not only through tellers' windows. Contrary to Burns' hypothesis that "the hydrogen bomb," by preventing diplomats from drawing on the threat of war, "has abolished the balance of power," in fact "historic diplomacy" has not come to an end or entirely changed its character. How is it that threats continue to be made by national representatives who are willing to declare that they believe that to carry out their threats would be suicidal?

7 Actually, in terms of a reasonable theory of threat-behavior, there is nothing at all paradoxical about this. To threaten, conditionally, to attack is not to choose attack. Even to commit oneself to carrying out the threat is not

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<sup>1</sup>World Politics, July, 1957, Vol. IX, No. 4, From Balance to Deterrence, p. 504 (my ital)

to choose war, or suicide: at most, it is to choose a risk of those events. And that risk might seem "small enough" in comparison to the gains to be enjoyed from a successful threat. Still, to the extent that it still represents threat-behavior, we would expect it to take on new patterns, reflecting the nature of the new threats being used and confronted.

No doubt, a reasonable threatener would have to be very sure, before committing himself, that his blackmail (or "deterrence") would succeed; he could accept at most a small risk that he would be called upon to carry out his threat. On the other hand, where the threatened action entails a strong possibility of nuclear war, the victim would resist only if he were very sure that the threatener will not carry out his threat. Under these circumstances, the threatener might not feel called upon to commit himself at all. He might bluff: make the threat, go through various maneuvers designed to make his opponent uncertain of his behavior, and let his opponent weigh the risks. Indeed, under a true Balance of Terror regime, he might feel free to be particularly provocative. Since the advantage to striking first would, by assumption, have disappeared, he needn't worry that the opponent would have a rational incentive to launch a pre-emptive attack, no matter how likely his threats made an eventual conflict appear.

Still, to bluff is to forego the maximum degree of credibility: hence, to accept a lower chance of success (along with lower risks). The threatener might decide that if he does go through the extra steps that serve to bind him irrevocably to carrying out his threat, the threat will then be "almost certain" to succeed; in other words, the opponent would be "almost certain" to regard the risk of resisting as "too great." He might, then, proceed to commit himself to carrying out his threat of mutual suicide.



Clearly, the situation is one we discussed in the last lecture, in which the willingness to risk conflict is very low for each party; neither is willing to take an action that significantly raises the risk of conflict, either in resisting or in committing himself to threats. As we saw then, in situations where a "normal" blackmailer may have difficulty in making his threats sufficiently credible, "madness" of two distinct sorts may pay off. If it is only necessary to create in the victim's mind a little uncertainty, a new possibility that the threat might be carried out, then "madness" in the form of non-rationality, unpredictability, erratic or impulsive or non-directed behavior, may do the trick.

On the other hand, it may be desirable to make the victim "sure" that the threat will be carried out: either because the demand is unusually high, or because the blackmailer wants to be very sure the victim will comply. In this case, it won't do for the blackmailer's action to be unpredictable; on the contrary, it must be highly predictable that he will carry out his threat. For this, "madness"-of a different sort--is helpful: "mad" preferences or expectations, such that the blackmailer would want to carry out the threat. A love, say, of violence; or very low regard for the status quo even relative to conflict; or virtual indifference among all outcomes other than the one demanded (so that if the victim resists, the blackmailer would "just as soon" pick conflict as anything else): all of these evidences of "madness" would strengthen the blackmailer's hand, by making his threat more credible. (We suggested last time that it was preferences like these that gave Hitler such a strong bargaining position at Munich.)

In the last few lectures we have been emphasizing what might be called "blackmail" threats: threats intended to change a well-recognized status quo,

in favor of one party and at the expense of the other. But I have been arguing that the same patterns arise in all threat-behavior: for example, in bargaining, where eventually an outcome is to be expected that will make both parties better off than a status quo, but where threats on both sides are used to influence that final outcome, each party trying to make it more favorable than it otherwise would be.

If the "status quo" just before Munich should be defined to include Hitler's fixed intention to invade all of Czechoslovakia immediately (in the belief that it was unlikely that the British and French would seriously intervene), then the negotiations ending with the Munich conference appear as typical bargaining sessions, in which both parties ended up with an outcome they preferred to the status quo, and which was influenced by threats on both sides.

¶ It is easy to overlook the influence of Chamberlain's threats, because the risk they posed in Hitler's mind were not enough to make him accept the territorial status quo. (Nor could they have been; even if Hitler had found them entirely credible, he would probably have preferred the risks of combat to accepting the territorial status quo: though it seems that his generals might have revolted against him. Thus Chamberlain seems correct in feeling that he could not avoid war by "calling Hitler's bluff," or by bluffing himself; whether he should have chosen to accept war rather than the Munich agreement as Churchill would probably have done, is another story.) Still, Chamberlain was threatening war . . . if Hitler should attack. <sup>¶</sup> "Horrible, fantastic, incredible," he said, that the English should be digging ~~t~~renches and trying on gas-masks; but they were doing these things, at the government's direction. If Hitler had attached no likelihood to these threats, they would not have influenced his decision; and he would never have sat down at a conference table



to accept the terms he did. If the threats had never been uttered, there would have been a German invasion, with or without World War II as a consequence. In connection with an offer far more favorable to Hitler than the status quo, Chamberlain's threats were influential; they gave him a bargaining position. In fact, against anyone less mad than Hitler, Chamberlain's threats would have been very impressive indeed. If Chamberlain had been confronting any of Hitler's own generals--even Goering--what would the outcome have been? That question is enough to suggest the influence on a bargaining situation of one man's preferences and character; Hitler's bargaining strength rested partly on the Luftwaffe, but not even the Commander of the Luftwaffe could have threatened its use to the effect that Hitler did. ~~(On the other hand, imagine~~  
~~Georges Bonnet facing Hitler instead of Chamberlain.)~~

So madness can be strength in blackmail and bargaining: what of deterrence? If deterrence is defined as the attempt to protect a status quo by threats, then the same sort of threats--promising mutual disaster--will still involve the same sort of problems. Again, unlimited and evident rationality may be a handicap to the threatener. As before, to win you don't have to be crazy, but it helps.

This is not to say that madness is essential to a deterrent policy, or that it is ever "desirable," or preferable to all other alternatives. But unless one can see how certain forms of irrationality can strengthen a bargaining position, how the reputation for calculating his risks on the basis of "normal" preferences can limit the credibility and effectiveness of a player's threats, one simply does not understand the basic problems of threat-making, whether in blackmail or deterrence. If we should conclude that certain threats are almost sure to fail of influence unless an impression of considerable madness

is conveyed to the opponent, that does not imply the advice to court madness; it <sup>should</sup> ~~might~~ suggest a search for new threats, *or an alternative to threats.*

A cheap substitute for an alarm system and a full-time guard in banks, for example, might be to supply each teller with a live hand grenade. On confronting a note passed into his cage by a lady with a glass of liquid, or a man with a paper bag or what might be a gun, the teller would be required (by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, say) to take up his grenade, pull the pin, and weigh it thoughtfully, ominously, in his hand. And I would hope that those who have been following these lectures till now will note at once: this could work. Unless we see that, a great deal of behavior which is, in fact, essentially similar to this strategy becomes meaningless, patternless. But even without considering its alternatives, we can see drawbacks to this method of deterrence. For one thing, there is the accident problem; this could be minimized, perhaps, by removing the detonators from the grenades.

The more serious problem is plausibility. This type of tactic makes unusual demands on the threatener, and a bank teller is simply not in a good position to meet them. Both he and the robber know that bank employees are not picked for their recklessness, their unpredictability, their aggressive impulses or lust for glory, their inability to count consequences. "Don't be a dead hero," a note I quoted in the last lecture instructed the teller. Now, by chance, it is just possible that that is precisely the teller's highest ambition: that he is, in fact, just as ready as his opponent to "make the place look like a battlefiiled," to quote another note. But how can he hope to convince the robber of that? How can he manage to look devil-may-care and dangerous--even if, deep underneath, he is--standing in his neat suit, in a teller's cage, at his chosen occupation, which consists of making correct change and resisting temptations to embezzle?

*Merdon*  
*Prisby*



And if he can't, why bother to play games with fake hand grenades?

When a teller with a hand grenade faces a robber with a menacing note and what may be a gun, our theoretical approach does not advise either player what to do nor how to act, nor does it predict in general what the outcome will be: whether one or the other will comply, whether both will use their weapons or both will flee. But it does allow us to guess that, somehow, the situation does not favor the teller. <sup>P</sup> Thus the predicament of Chamberlain, the businessman, bargaining with Hitler: in particular, after Munich, before the invasion of Poland. Recall Chamberlain's inability to make Hitler believe what was then the truth: that Britain was in fact committed, not only to entering the war on behalf of Poland but to fighting it to a finish. Churchill, at this point, could have been no more thoroughly committed than Chamberlain: but he could have been much more convincing. And that precisely because, to Hitler, he looked mad, daring, vengeful, heedless of risks: qualities Hitler could admire but did not desire to confront in his opponents.

<sup>P</sup> Chamberlain, at that point, simply had not the power to look dangerous to Hitler. "Our enemies are little worms; I saw them at Munich," said Hitler to his generals, to reassure them--this time wrongly!-- that the Allied threats could be ignored. After the demonstration at Munich (of what? of caution, of calculation, of rationality) Hitler could not believe that Chamberlain had truly committed himself, in a game for smaller stakes, to enter what he himself had earlier defined as a "world war which may end civilization." (WB 164)

What followed was a demonstration of <sup>the</sup> peculiar dangers of abandoning, in fact but not in appearance, freedom of choice and the rational, sober, calculation of alternatives. The "end of civilization": who but a madman could choose that freely? Who but a madman would even commit himself irrevocably

to such an ultimatum, given the inevitable risks of accident, of failure of communication, of madness or counter-commitment in the opponent? And even if he should so misjudge those risks as to commit himself: what man who was not insanely rigid could fail to "listen to reason," even at the last moment: fail to admit that what was asked of him was not, really, worse than death? In the face of a determined opponent, will not a "rational" player find ways if he is given sufficient time, to undo the commitment he entered into rationally: thus avoiding the certainty of mutual disaster? So the opponent may think; and, not being deterred, he may proceed to commit himself to the forbidden action, so as to appear appropriately determined at the right moment.

The man who is not "open to reason," who listens to an inner voice that tells him not of consequences but of principle, honor, virtue, prestige, may not inspire trust in his ability, in normal times, to weigh conflicting demands, to choose an efficient policy and to carry it through judiciously. His qualities go unappreciated except when a particular problem arises: when it comes to seem important to make certain threats very convincing; and when those threats are such that a man of reason, of flexible outlook, would be hard put to make them even slightly plausible. Just as Hitler was indispensable to the success of German threats in the Thirties, not every man can wield effectively deterrent threats of mutual annihilation: a certain reputation, a public impression, is required, and it is not come by overnight.

There has been no better discussion of the psychological problem of deterring with threats of massive retaliation than occurs in a passage of *The Secret Agent*, written by Joseph Conrad in 1907. Two men sit in a London beerhall discussing an explosion that had taken place earlier that day; what was apparently a terroristic attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. Both



men are anarchists; and one, a specialist in demolitions, had in fact furnished the explosives that <sup>had</sup> gone up accidentally that morning. This man, a "bespectacled, dingy little man" known as the Professor, is described:

His flat, large ears departed widely from the sides of his skull, which looked frail enough . . . to crush between thumb and forefinger; the dome of the forehead seemed to rest on the rim of the spectacles; the flat cheeks, of a greasy, unhealthy complexion, were smudged by the miserable poverty of a thin, darker whisker. The lamentable inferiority of the whole physique was made ludicrous by the supremely self-confident bearing of the individual. His speech was curt, and he had a particular impressive manner of keeping silent.

The other, a "big and muscular" ladies' man named Ossipon, is trying to find out the Professor's connection with the explosion, but his questions are roundabout; he is "obviously intimidated by the little man's overwhelming air of unconcern."

"When talking with this comrade . . . the big Ossipon suffered from a sense of moral and physical insignificance." Finally he asks in a low voice: "Do you give your stuff to anybody who's up to asking you for it?"

"My absolute rule is never to refuse anybody--as long as I have a pinch by me."

"That's a principle?"

"It's a principle."

"And you think it's sound?"

"Perfectly. Always. Under every circumstance. What could stop me? Why should I not? Why should I think twice about it?"

"Do you mean to say you would hand it over to a 'tec' if one came to ask you for your wares?"

The Professor smiled faintly.

"Let them come and try it on, and you will see," he says. "They know me, but I know also every one of them. They won't come near me--not they."

"But they could send someone--rig a plant on you. Don't you see? Get the stuff from you in that way, and then arrest you with the proof in their hands."

> "Proof of what? Dealing in explosives without a license perhaps."

"Why?" asks Ossipon.

"Because they know very well I take care never to part with the last handful of my wares. I've it always by me." He touched the breast of his coat lightly. "In a thick glass flask," he added.

"So I have been told," said Ossipon, with a shade of wonder in his voice. "But I didn't know if--."

"They know," interrupted the little man, crisply, leaning against the straight chair back, which rose higher than his fragile head. "I shall never be arrested. The game isn't good enough for any policeman of them all. To deal with a man like me you require sheer, naked, inglorious heroism."

"Or recklessness," says Ossipon, "or simply ignorance. They've only to get somebody for the job who does not know you carry enough stuff in your pocket to blow yourself and everything sixty yards of you to pieces."

"I never affirmed I could not be eliminated," rejoined the other. "But that wouldn't be an arrest. Moreover, it's not so easy as it looks."

"Bah!" Ossipon contradicted. "Don't be too sure of that. What's to prevent half-a-dozen of them jumping upon you from behind in the street? With your arms pinned to your sides you could do nothing--could you?"

"Yes; I could. I am seldom out in the streets after dark," said the little man, impassively, "and never very late. I walk always with my left hand closed round the india-rubber ball which I have in my trouser pocket. The pressing of this ball actuates a detonator inside the flask I carry in my pocket. . . The tube leads up--"



"With a swift, disclosing gesture he gave Ossipon a glimpse of an india-rubber tube, resembling a slender brown worm, issuing from the armhold of his waistcoat and plunging into the inner breast pocket of his jacket."

Ossipon gasps. "And then--"

"Nobody in this room could hope to escape. Nor yet this couple going up the stairs now."

This is the threat that deters the police, not from assaulting him, not from killing him--which would remove any of his inhibitions about carrying out the threat, but which would make him incapable of doing so--but from formally arresting him: a less provocative act, but one which would leave him free, if he should choose, to carry out his threat. Like any threat of massive retaliation, it would not have to be very credible to be effective; but would it, say, in the hands of Ossipon, the ladies' man, be credible at all?

"Nobody in this room could hope to escape."

As the Professor speaks, a player piano is clanging. "Then all became still. For a moment Ossipon imagined the overlighted place changed into a dreadful black hole belching horrible fumes choked with ghastly rubbish of smashed brickwork and mutilated corpses. He had such a distinct perception of ruin and death that he shuddered again. The other observed, with an air of calm sufficiency:

'In the last instance it is character alone that makes for one's safety. There are very few people in the world whose character is as well established as mine.'

"'I wonder how you managed it,' growled Ossipon."

'Force of personality,' said the other, without raising his voice; and coming from the mouth of that obviously miserable organism the assertion caused the robust Ossipon to bite his lower lip."

"Force of personality," the Professor repeated, "with ostentatious calm."

"'I have the means to make myself deadly, but that by itself, you understand, is absolutely nothing in the way of protection. What is effective is the belief those people have in my will to use the means. That's their impression. It is absolute. Therefore I am deadly.'"

Later in the conversation, Ossipon remarks, "If the police here knew their business they would shoot you full of holes with revolvers, or else try to sand-bag you from behind in broad daylight."'

"Yes," the little man agrees readily. "'But for that they would have to face their own institutions. Do you see? That requires uncommon grit. Grit of a special kind.'"

He is speaking, of course, of English police. Ossipon points this out: "I fancy that's exactly what would happen to you if you were to set up your laboratory in the States. They don't stand on ceremony with their institutions there.'"

"'I am not likely to go and see. Otherwise your remark is just,' admitted the other. 'They have more character over there, and there character is essentially anarchistic. Fertile ground for us, the States--very good ground.'" (70)

Gonrad does not go into reasons why the police--even the English--might be tempted to do this. There are two at least. First, the Professor could miscalculate. He can't wait until an arrest is complete, until he is handcuffed; at some point, if he is ever to carry out his threat, he must interpret a set of gestures and statements as the cue for action. And he could be wrong. No matter how scrupulously the Force avoids him, they cannot be sure he will not someday obliterate himself--and a blockful of passersby--on a false alarm.



Second, there is the possibility of accident: a collision, an accidental squeeze on the detonator. The possibility is underlined by the fact that it was, indeed, one of the Professor's own demolitions that had killed its user only that morning. For the police to forego an opportunity to eliminate him is for them to accept the real possibility of an unsolved explosion. Such are the calculations that might give them the grit to launch, against the spirit of their own institutions, a surprise, "preventive" attack upon him.

Meanwhile, the massive threat protects the little man from lesser assaults. A later scene shows the massive threat in action; the Professor and Chief Inspector Heat, a large, courageous, moustached man whose job it is to keep watch over the anarchists, confront each other unexpectedly in an alley short-cut. "You are not wanted," Heat informs the little man ominously, but carefully. The anarchist laughs, shaking without a sound; he goads the Inspector to add: "Not yet. When I want you I shall know where to find you." At this, "The stunted, weakly figure before him spoke at last."

"'I've no doubt the papers would give you an obituary notice then. You know best what that would be worth to you. I should think you can imagine easily the sort of stuff that would be printed. But you may be exposed to the unpleasantness of being buried together with me, though I suppose your friends would make an effort to sort us out as much as possible.'"

"The atrocious allusiveness of the words had its effect on Chief Inspector Heat. He had too much insight, and too much exact information as well, to dismiss them as rot . . . But Chief Inspector Heat was also a man, and he could not let such words pass."

"'All this is good to frighten children with,' he said, 'I'll have you yet.'"

"'Doubtless,' was the answer; 'but there's no time like the present, believe

me. For a man of real convictions this is a fine opportunity of self-sacrifice . . . There isn't even a cat near us, and these condemned old houses would make a good heap of bricks where you stand. You'll never get me at so little cost to life and property, which you are paid to protect.; (86-87)

The Inspector, struggling to keep the upper hand in this exchange, points out that if he were to lay hands on the Professor, he would be no better than the anarchist: who replies to this, "Ah! The game!"

"What are you after?" the Inspector asks him finally; the Professor smiles and makes no reply. But earlier Ossipon had asked him the same question: "What do you want from us? What is it you are after yourself?"

"A perfect detonator," was the <sup>e</sup>preemptory answer. "It is a reference to some earlier remarks on the hardware of his deterrence. On being shown the india-rubber tube leading from the Professor's pocket, Ossipon had commented: "It is instantaneous, of course?"

"Far from it," confessed the other, with a reluctance which seemed to twist his mouth dolorously. 'A full twenty seconds must elapse from the moment I press the ball till the explosion takes place.'

'Phew!' whistled Ossipon, completely appalled. 'Twenty seconds! Horrors! You mean to say that you could face that? I should go crazy--'

'Wouldn't matter if you did. Of course, it's the weak point of this special system, which is only for my own use.' (66) For others, he implies, the prospect of a waiting period might be worse than the thought of death itself; it could paralyze their fingers on the trigger. For them, a detonator is necessary that brings the end quickly. But even given the will to use the detonator, will the mechanism work? If it can discharge accidentally, as that morning, can it not also fail? For anyone but the Professor, there will



in any case be doubt of his intent to carry out the threat; if there is an additional doubt of the reliability of the hardware, the deterrence is in danger. "The manner of exploding," the Professor admits, "is always the weak point with us. I am trying to invent a detonator that would adjust itself to all conditions of action, and even to unexpected changes of conditions. A variable and yet perfectly precise mechanism. A really intelligent detonator." (66)

For the police to forego the opportunity to eliminate him cheaply is for them to accept the real possibility of an unprovoked explosion, stemming from accident or miscalculation. Such calculations might give Even English police the grit to launch, against their nature, a surprise, "preventive" attack upon him. (especially if he extends threats)

What makes the problem difficult is that all these factors of vulnerability, warning, alert, accident and miscalculation are interrelated. If the Professor reduces the probability of accident, say by making the detonator harder to operator or by taking his hand off it, he may reduce the incentive of the police to eliminate him: but he will make it easier for them to arrest him. If he abolished their incentive to "pre-empt," by making the mechanism wholly automatic so that an explosion was guaranteed: this would probably accentuate both the accident problem and the false alarm problem.

We have examined, in the third lecture, a few of the implications of a system of deterrent powers, each of them with less-than-perfect detonators that gave each an incentive to pre-empt the other's attack: even when the other's attack might be less than certain.

However, supposing that the "perfect" detonator existed, which could be relied on to work when the button is pressed, and suppose that the action to be deterred can be recognized unambiguously: there remains the problem of will, willingness to pull the trigger.

This problem is usually dismissed much too blithely. Just commit yourself: make mechanism automatic and lock it; destroy alternatives; invest prestige, honor, reputation; convince yourself that what is demanded is "worse than death": hence, that you can't be blackmailed into accepting it.

But: a) It is hard to convince anyone that your honor, reputation, etc. is that important to you.

b) It is easy to convince yourself that the outcome offered is the "worst possible"--worse than death--until the moment comes when death is offered as the serious alternative. The opponent may count on being able to "educate you" at the last, crucial moment; in any case, he may think he can, and commit himself accordingly. Hitler's successes were based on convincing his opponents, at the last moment when their alternatives had been narrowed down to two, that fates they had thought worse than death were, after all, worth living for.

c) It is hard to narrow alternatives down just to one; generally, these nations who believed themselves entirely committed discovered, with Hitler's help, that they had left one alternative to the strategy that they now saw as leading them to suicide: surrender. This they discovered just as the moment that they had decided that the terms offered were not clearly worse than death.

d) Automation is possible. One plan (<sup>e.g. the</sup> Schlieffen Plan); standard, dogmatic, set of expectations; fast reaction time; obstacles to withdrawing plan; decentralization, poor communications. All this can amount to total commitment (perhaps much better than many authorities or allies realize); but it is not irrevocable.

<sup>(as the Schlieffen Plan was fatally modified)</sup>  
Plans can be changed or scrapped--if <sup>the</sup> enemy gives time and incentives for doing so. Thus, such plans: a) can really commit, better than the enemy realizes, leading to a miscalculation; but b) if he does realize, the security they give may be illusory, because he may count on "unlocking" <sup>the</sup> system at <sup>2</sup> crucial moment.



Thus: Don't think you can "throw the initiative" so easily to opponent;<sup>21</sup> he can ~~set~~ out to unlock your commitment.

All of this suggests that not everyone can wield a threat of massive retaliation effectively. Once the Professor had perfected his thoroughly reliable detonator, could Ossipon take it over with equal effect?

The qualities of such a man as the Professor go unappreciated except<sup>2</sup> when it suddenly comes to seem very important to make certain threats very convincing; and when those threats are such that a man of reason, of flexible outlook, would be hard put to make them even slightly plausible. Just as Hitler was indispensable to the success of German threats in the Thirties, not every man can operate successfully with deterrent threats of mutual annihilation: a certain reputation, a public impression, is required, and it is not come by overnight.

Now, suppose that such a man exists: a man of character and force, an inner-directed man, like the Professor. Could not Ossipon come under his protection: say, by handcuffing himself to him? Here we come into a second class of problems: problems that arise when one player has achieved commitment, and does possess a perfect detonator. For such a player has surrendered freedom of choice; his actions can be manipulated by the opponent; and fear of conflict, of obliteration, say, could become-among his own allies--fear of his unreasoned response. This is the powerful threat that has been delivered to an opponent: the threat to ignore that player's evident commitment.

Ossipon, handcuffed to the Professor, might live for some time in relative security, except for a slight twitch emerging when he thought of the possibilities of accidents or miscalculation. Because of those possibilities, he will have kept the key to the handcuffs; and he will have a promise from the Professor not to pull the trigger in his behalf without his own request.

Knowing this, how might the police separate him from the shelter of the Professor's threat? Several paths seem open to them: All <sup>are</sup> based on the notion that they are about to ignore his threat.

- a) They could maintain they simply didn't believe <sup>the</sup> Professor's threat; they could act careless, reckless, confident.
- b) They could indicate they were thinking of eliminating the Professor, because of their concern with the accident problem and miscalculation.
- c) They could suggest to Ossipon they meant to arrest him anyway, believing that the Professor would not respond in his behalf.

The more that Ossipon believed that the Professor would respond, the more powerful these hints would be; the more powerful his incentive to come quietly, without invoking his <sup>friend's</sup> ~~friend's~~ commitment: indeed, cooperating fully with his attacker in calling off his own defense.



Since the early 1950's, NATO strategy has been based on the assurance of successive presidents of the United States that they would initiate nuclear war against the Soviet Union in the face of an "overwhelming" Soviet attack with conventional (non-nuclear) forces. And since the mid and late 1950's, such a nuclear initiative would virtually ensure a Soviet nuclear response annihilating Western Europe, if not--until the mid-1960's--the United States as well.

Of the various problems confronting this "defense," one has often been addressed specifically: how to assure that the President knows unambiguously when the moment has come to carry out his commitment: how to make the alliance command and control system---including the President--into "a truly intelligent detonator." ✓

An early concept of one of the functions of NATO forces in Europe was that they would serve, to use a phrase attributed to ✓ Walter Lippman, as a "plateglass window." "How does a plate-glass window protect a store?" asked the exponents of this notion. A thief can get through it easily enough; but not without a loud crash, not without setting off the burglar alarm. Protecting forces--the law, or in the NATO case, American retaliatory force--need a warning signal to alert them, but more than that: for them to react swiftly and decisively, the signal must be relatively unambiguous. If the "false alarm" rate of the warning system is high--if the signal can be tripped off accidentally by a cat, or the storeowner, or a short-circuit--the duty officer in the station, the cop on the beat, may take certain precautionary measures, but they can't take irrevocable measures. But the ~~smashing~~ smashing of plate-glass storefront is more reliable evidence that a crime is taking place.

Similarly, if the NATO nations were entirely undefended on the ground, not only would there be a chance that they could be occupied quite quietly, presenting the United States with a fait accompli and the task of dislodging them, but even if some warning were given it would tend to be ambiguous. An unopposed occupation force would not have to be large, and the intentions of a small force would not be immediately obvious. Was it merely a probing action? Had it wandered across the frontier by accident, on maneuvers? Was it the action of some subordinate unit commander, without higher authority? Or was it initiated by a satellite without Russia's approval; perhaps in hopes of getting Russia's approval after succeeding, or of committing Russia to support it? Was it merely a feint, a demonstration, to emphasize the ease of the operation, the impotence of the country penetrated? Such uncertainties wouldn't have to loom very large to keep our major retaliatory forces from undertaking any irrevocable action: such as launching missiles or European-based bombers towards Russia. By the time the nature of the action became sufficiently clear, it might seem "too late" for retaliation to be worthwhile. Or so the Russians might be encouraged to think, even if only wishfully.

Hence the advantage of having moderate forces on the frontier as a burglar alarm. Since fairly large forces and a well-planned effort would be necessary to penetrate them, the warning signal would not only be reliable but unambiguous; it would trip off retaliation if anything would. And since the Russians could see this---could



see that they could not hope to expand without making it immediately clear that a large-scale, armed, deliberate invasion was taking place against resistance--could see that they could not invade without provoking the maximum possible risk of retaliation--they would be deterred. Thus, at any rate, the theory.

By the same theory, most proponents of disengagement in Europe urge that countries in the neutralized zone should have strong conventional forces: so that any attempt at reoccupation, being large-scale and opposed, must be unambiguous. It seems a good theory; it represents fairly the challenge that a plate-glass window presents to a thief: or that Khrushchev would see in European conventional defenses. It is also very similar to a problem that Adolph Hitler faced in the late 1930's. In this lecture we will consider how he solved it.

It is fashionable just now to regard Hitler as a unique phenomenon, unlikely to be reproduced. It is true that he had peculiar advantages as a blackmailer; he was mad in ways that helped his threats enormously. But he was also shrewd enough, in a rare way, to know the power of his madness; he was self-conscious, and he took the art of coercion seriously.

We shall return in a later lecture to Hitler's special qualities as a blackmailer; today we are concerned with his techniques. But one characteristic must be mentioned: violence had, in itself, no costs for Hitler. It was, in fact, a preferred means. And risk was another of his values. Like violence, it represented to him daring, will, superiority, self-confidence. He was, then, readier to take

high risks of war than were his opponents: or, for that matter, his own generals. "The German question," he told them, "can be solved only by way of force and this never without risk...We must place 'force with risk' at the head of our program."

But this does not mean that he was insensitive to risks, nor that he was unwilling to reduce them. Even he could not pretend to his generals, in the early years, that the risks that would be involved in open battle with England and France, or before the Anschluss, Italy or Czechoslovakia, were acceptable. His argument to his military staff, and to himself, was that the risks were, in fact, small that these nations would interfere at all; and he set out to make them smaller.

For he had a theory that his generals lacked; and this theory, as they and their opponents learned, was not mad at all. He thought he knew--and he was right--what could be done with threats. He knew the tactics that could make threats "credible enough," and he guessed how credible--how little credible--they had to be to influence the particular opponents he was facing. Impatient though he was to try out his Wehrmacht, he saw the merits of testing first his private theory. "Whoever has experienced war at the front will want to refrain from all avoidable bloodshed," he had told Rauschning in 1932. <sup>1</sup>"There is a broadened strategy, with intellectual weapons.. What is the object of war? To make the enemy capitulate...Why should I demoralize him by military means if I can do so better and more cheaply in other ways?"

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1. Rauschning, page 7,9.



But why demoralize, say, Austria in other ways when he could do so easily by military means? In the two cases we shall study, the Anschluss and the march to Prague after Munich, his military superiority over his victim was obviously great enough to bring victory. But there was the problem of the plate-glass window: the big friends, the upholders of international order, who quite possibly would involve themselves if there was a loud commotion. And Hitler, no less than his generals, was quite conscious of the immense costs their intervention might entail, if they should intervene.

There was, in these early years, a considerable likelihood of crushing military defeat in such a conflict: not without cost to the opponents, but decisive for the downfall of the Third Reich. Even a stalemate would mean the curtailment of Hitler's plans for expansion and perhaps a disastrous loss of authority for Hitler over his generals, who were impressed at this stage with their unreadiness and whom he had promised victory without fighting. And even victory, at the cost of heavy bloodshed, was likely to frighten his enemies into strong alliance and his own people into withdrawing their support.

Still, even if the Wehrmacht should simply charge into Austria unannounced, overwhelming the resistance by superior force, it was by no means certain that any larger power would intervene. Hitler might have been willing to take that risk; but his generals, who estimated it much larger than he did, were not; and in any case, even Hitler reckoned it crucial to reduce the risk as much as possible. Later, after he had acquired the Sudetanlands at Munich, he faced exactly the same problems with respect to the rest of Czechoslovakia as he

had with Austria. In both cases, he wished to present his opponents with a *fait accompli*: to put on them the burden of penetrating his defensive positions and the onus of disturbing the new "status quo" and starting World War II, to move before they were fully committed to a specific response, to make their retaliation look to them like pure "spite" or "punishment," (provoking counter-retaliation and coming too late to serve any "positive purpose,"). For this, two conditions were necessary. The occupation must be completed very fast. And meanwhile, the reflexes of the major opponents must be slowed, their fear of "going off half-cocked" exploited, by making the nature of the move ambiguous. Ambiguity could paralyze any immediate response; and when the deed was over, Hitler's theory told him, there would be no rush on his opponents' part to dispel the obscurity that gave them an excuse for continued inaction. They would not be anxious to see in his move an offense against international order, or an eventual threat to themselves, either of which would challenge them to responses that would be costly, dangerous, and politically unpopular. When it was too late for them to counter his move successfully, Hitler saw, his enemies would thank him for making his expansion decently ambiguous; as Lewis Namier has put it: "Ambiguity is the soul of appeasement."

The equations so far read: for minimum risk of intervention, a *fait accompli*; for that, speed and ambiguity; and both of those demand there must be no fighting at all. The Wehrmacht could give him victory over local resistance; but that was not good enough. Direct use of military means could not give him what he needed, what his



generals demanded: an unresisted occupation. That was the limited--but crucial task for his "intellectual weapons:" a job for blackmail.

Yet coercion on this scale was no easy task. What he was demanding--what he "offered" them--was the peaceful submission of a formerly sovereign state to incorporation within Germany! At first glance, the political leaders of this state were likely to regard this as their "worst possible outcome"--and so long as they continued to believe this, they could not be coerced by threats into accepting it. Even war, they might think, might hold out some chance of avoiding this outcome, given the chance of intervention by larger powers; so why should they hand over peacefully what could not, perhaps, be taken from them by force?

Besides, if they refused, would not Hitler see the risks of intervention and be deterred from his adventure? And even if they could be persuaded that these hopes were vain, they might decide--especially if forced to a hasty decision--that it was better to be defeated honorably in a hopeless war than to surrender ignominiously without even a show of resistance.

Before his blackmail could hope to be effective, then, Hitler had to convince his victims not only that he was not to be deterred (by their resistance or by fear of intervention) but that the consequences of resistance would be worse than those of compliance.

Given the enormity of his demand--passive surrender of independence--Hitler could scarcely convince them that his "punishment" would be very much worse. Hence, in the terms of our last lecture, their "critical

risk," their willingness to resist," would be very high: i.e., they would need to be very sure that this punishment would result if they resisted, before they would choose to comply. All blackmail presumes a rational decision by the victim; but this one would have to be "ultra-rational," based upon a very close calculation of probabilities and alternative outcomes. <sup>P</sup> It was, in fact, true that Hitler was prepared both to invade them, and to take special vengeance for resistance; his problem was not that emphasized by Thomas Schelling in his "Essay on Bargaining," how actually to commit himself for bargaining purposes. He was committed; the problem was to make his opponents very sure of this. And he had to do this without public commitments that would give unambiguous warning to the major powers; and without giving his victims time for reflection, time to appeal to others who might proceed to commit themselves. <sup>P</sup> His problem, finally: to make his victims very sure, very suddenly, that he would punish them for resisting; and to make the pain of his punishment, compared to the pain of complying, extraordinarily vivid. Diplomatic channels could not transmit this "message" with the force, the noiseless clarity demanded. Only one channel was reliable enough; the personal, summit interview. And so, in the spring of 1938, Hitler invited his first victim to Berchtesgaden.

There is only one authoritative account of the interview that follows. It is in a diary that appeared after the war, signed: "Kurt von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria and Prisoner of Hitler." The diary was written in various Nazi prison camps; again and again it returns to the implications of one day in the writer's life.



<sup>1</sup>February 12, 1943: "Five years ago today I stood before Hitler at Berchtesgaden." As the war years pass, Schuschnigg notes the developments he hears on a radio he has bribed his guards to keep: toward the end, he is joined in prison by a collection of Nazi generals, who record the progress of the war each night on a military map, and fascinate him with their general staff meetings. It's clear that the story is almost over, as he writes, in a sense, quite accurately, on February 12, 1945: "It all began today seven years ago, with the interview at Berchtesgaden...seven years."

February 12, 1938: That day began, <sup>2</sup>in Schuschnigg's account, with the Chancellor and his undersecretary, Guido Schmidt, driving from the Austrian border in the company of the German Ambassador to Austria, Franz von Papen. Von Papen had suggested the visit, to discuss "such misunderstandings and points of friction as have persisted after the agreement of 1936," and to reaffirm that agreement. Whatever details were discussed, von Papen had assured Schuschnigg, who had considerable reservations, the result of the meeting would in no case be to the disadvantage of the Austrian government, nor would it entail any aggravation of Austro-German relations. "The worst that can happen," the Ambassador told him, "is that after the meeting we are exactly where we are today. The Fuehrer told me so himself."

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1. Schuschnigg <sup>Diary</sup> ~~Bible~~, page 235, 264

2. Schuschnigg, page 10-24

By the time they have arrived at the Berghof, having climbed up an icy mountain road on a caterpillar reconnaissance car, Schuschnigg has seen fields of barracks, troops and equipment: all perched on the Austrian frontier. By Hitler's side, at the entrance to the Berghof, stand three generals. The two Chancellors proceed at once to Hitler's study for the first conversation, alone.

Schuschnigg begins by thanking Hitler for the invitation; then he comments on the scene from the picture window. "This room with its wonderful view has doubtless been the scene of many a decisive conference, Herr Reichskanzler."

"Yes, in this room my thoughts ripen," Hitler replies; and then he adjusts the tone of the conversation. "But we did not get together to speak of the fine view or of the weather." From this point on, the conversation becomes and remains, as Schuschnigg puts it, "somewhat unilateral." Within a few minutes Hitler's shouting is audible in the next room, as he rages at the unworthiness, the worthlessness of Austria, its "zero" contribution to German culture. (Beethoven?" asks Schuschnigg. "A German," says Hitler. "But he chose to live in Vienna . . . and what of Metternich?" "That's as may be." says Hitler, and gets down to the business of the interview.)

The whole history of Austria is just one uninterrupted act of high treason . . . And I can tell you right now, Herr Schuschnigg, that I am absolutely determined to make an end of all this. The German Reich is one of the great powers, and nobody will raise his voice if it settles its border problems.

I have a historic mission; and this mission I will fulfill because Providence has destined me to do so . . . Who is not with me will be crushed.

But what are your complaints, ASchuschnigg asks; Austria wanted only to live in peace.

"That is what you say, Herr Schuschnigg. But I am telling you that I am going to solve the so-called Austrian problem one way or another."



"One way or the other." Another statesman was to hear that phrase in Berchtesgaden, in the fall of that same year: Neville Chamberlain, on his first visit to Hitler.

"I shall not put up with this any longer. I shall settle this question in one way or another. I shall take matters into my own hands," Hitler was to say then, speaking of the Sudetenland.

His interpreter, Paul Schmidt, comments on this phrase in writing later of that scene. "This was the first time, in a discussion with a foreign statesman," says Schmidt (who had not been needed in the talk with Schuschnigg), "that the phrase 'in one way or another' had been used--a phrase which I observed then and later to be an extreme danger signal. I rightly translated it 'one way or another,' but its meaning now and on later occasions amounted to: Either the other side gives in, or a solution will be found by means of the application of force, invasion, or war." (Hitler's Interpreter, 92-93)

Speaking now to Schuschnigg, Hitler needs no interpreter to make his meaning plain. He goes on to complain that Austria is taking measures to protect itself. "Do you imagine that I don't know you are fortifying your border against the Reich?"

But nobody can object, says Schuschnigg, if Austria prepares a defense against illegal intrusions.

I have only to give an order, and in one single night, all your ridiculous defense mechanisms are blown to bits. You don't seriously believe that you can stop me or even delay me for half an hour, do you? Perhaps you will wake up one morning in Vienna to find us there--just like a spring storm. And then you'll see something. I would very much like to save Austria from such a fate, because such an action would mean blood.

Why this concern for Austria? It was true enough that the "scarecrows" on the frontier could not hold Hitler's legions long. But they weren't meant to. They formed the "plate-glass window," designed to make an evident military invasion of any "illegal intrusion." Schuschnigg spells this out for the Fuehrer.

"I am fully aware that you can invade Austria, but Herr Reichskanzler, whether we like it or not, that would mean bloodshed. We are not alone in this world, and such a step would probably mean war." He did not exaggerate. Most of Hitler's own generals would have agreed with him. Even though there were no firm commitments for military support of Austria, England and France had pledged themselves to uphold her independence as a member of the League of Nations; Czechoslovakia, whose frontier would be directly threatened by Anschluss, might well move; and it was Italy that had forestalled Anschluss in 1934 by a partial mobilization on the Brenner Pass. Schuschnigg, then, is reminding Hitler of his own payoffs: of the costs, the risks that he would run in carrying out his threat. It is Hitler's task to turn his attention back to the outlines of the Austrian choice.

It is easy enough to talk of war while we are sitting here in our comfortable easy chairs. But war means endless misery for millions. Do you want to take this responsibility upon yourself, Herr Schuschnigg?

We shall hear this refrain again and again from Hitler. "Yours is the choice," he tells Benes, Hacha, France, England. "My decision is made; it is irrevocable. I will march; it is for you to decide to commence, or not, a second world war. Think well; is that what you want?"

"I have made Herr Benes an offer," he screams to the world at Nuremberg, seven months later; "The decision now lies in his hands: Peace or War . . . Now let Herr Benes make his choice." (B 424)



It is the essence of blackmail that the victim be made to feel that he controls the blackmailer's behavior: that what the blackmailer will do will depend on what the victim chooses. In fact, as we have seen in the last lecture, it may be necessary for the blackmailer to take special steps to create and demonstrate this dependence; he commits himself, to convince the victim that resistance to his demands will "cause" him inevitably to carry out his threatened punishment. <sup>P</sup> Thus, it is a peculiarity of coercion as a form of power that it usually implies, at least in the victim's mind, some degree of power by the victim over the coercer's own behavior. It is, indeed, the coercer who forces this power upon the reluctant victim. When the threatener has committed himself and his opponent has not, it is the victim who is left, alone, with freedom of choice: with the opportunity to make a "rational decision". He has the initiative, which he can use to initiate, say, world war; or to give in to the blackmailer's demands. <sup>P</sup> Having confronted Schuschnigg with his choice, Hitler now sets to work on Schuschnigg's payoffs. First, he must not believe that intervention by the major powers will save Austria from defeat.

Don't think for one moment that anybody on earth is going to thwart my decisions. Italy? I see eye to eye with Mussolini . . . and England? England will not move one finger for Austria . . . and France? Well, two years ago we marched on the Rhineland with a handful of battalions, that was the time I risked everything . . . But now it is too late for France.

Second, Schuschnigg must see that the punishment for resistance would be worse than defeat: much worse than peaceful surrender, with all its ignominy. "Such an action would mean blood," Hitler said earlier. But how to make it credible that it would mean much blood, given that Austria could not in any case put up long resistance? "After the Army," says Hitler, "my SA and the Austrian Legion would move in, and nobody can stop their just revenge--not even I."

Do you want to make another Spain of Austria? I would like to avoid all that --if possible."

Finally, to return to Hitler's payoffs: Schuschnigg must be convinced that whether or not it is true that the great powers would stand aside, Hitler believes that they would; hence, he does not see the operation as costly for him, he will not be deterred from his goal by any fears of intervention.

The world must know that it is unbearable for a great power like Germany to have every little state on her borders believe that it can provoke her . . . I give you once more, and for the last time, the opportunity to come to terms, Herr Schuschnigg. Either we find a solution now or else events will take their course. And we shall see whether you will like these events . . . Think it over, Herr Schuschnigg, think it over well. I can only wait until this afternoon. If I tell you that, you will do well to take my words literally. I don't believe in bluffing. All my past is proof for that. I have achieved everything that I set out to do and have thus become perhaps the greatest German of all history."

The morning interview has been spent on the consequences of Schuschnigg's choosing to resist: the nature and likelihood of Hitler's punishment: but . . .

"What exactly are your wishes?" Schuschnigg asks finally. "That we can discuss this afternoon," says Hitler. It is time for lunch. At the dinner table, surrounded by his generals, Hitler talked of cars, of houses, houses and architecture; he seemed, says Schuschnigg, "in excellent spirits." Afterwards the Austrians were left to talk with the generals; for the first time Schuschnigg, a heavy chain-smoker, was allowed to light a cigaret. At last Schuschnigg and Schmidt were brought before Ribbentrop and von Papen and presented with a list of demands.

As Hitler himself described these to some Austrian Nazis two weeks later, "The Protocol . . . was so far-reaching that, if completely carried out, the Austrian problem would be automatically solved." (B 388) Schuschnigg and Schmidt quickly reached the same conclusion. Among other things, a Nazi,



Seyss-Inquart, was to be appointed immediately as Minister of Public Security, with full control of the police and armed forces. That and other demands meant, as Schuschnigg put it, "the complete end of the independence of the Austrian government." At his protest, and reminder to von Papen of the promises made earlier, "Herr von Papen assured us that he was as much surprised as we."

Again Schuschnigg was brought before Hitler, who was pacing excitedly up and down in his study.

Herr Schuschnigg, I have decided to make one last attempt. Here is the draft of the document. There is nothing to be discussed about it. I will not change a single iota. You will either sign it as it stands or else our meeting has been useless. In that case I shall decide during the night what will be done next."

Schuschnigg pointed out that only the President could appoint cabinet members or grant amnesty to Nazi prisoners; his signature alone meant nothing. He couldn't guarantee that the time limits stipulated would be observed.

"You have to guarantee that," said Hitler. "I could not possibly, Herr Reichskanzler."

"At this answer Hitler seemed to lose his self-control. He ran to the doors, opened them, and shouted, 'General Keitel!' Then, turning back to me, he said, 'I shall have you called later.'"

In the antechamber, Schmidt told Schuschnigg that he had been talking to Keitel when Hitler had shouted for him; Keitel had changed his tone instantly to one of enmity. He would not be surprised, said Schmidt, if they both were arrested in the next five minutes.

In fact, what Hitler wanted to discuss with Keitel was slightly less ominous for the Chancellor. Later Keitel relayed Hitler's wishes to Jodl and Admiral Canaris. As Jodl recorded them in his diary, "the Fuehrer's order is to the effect that military pressure shamming military action should be kept up until the 15th." The next day he added: "The effect is quick and strong. In Austria the impression is created that Germany is undertaking serious

military preparations." (B 386) The German military attache in Vienna was recalled, rolling stock was assembled, maneuvers held on the Austrian frontier. In the end, the effect of these charades may have been no greater than the effect of the moments, that the Austrian Chancellor and his Foreign Secretary waited for arrest.

This lasted only half an hour, after which Hitler called Schuschnigg again and told him: "I have decided to change my mind--for the first time in my entire life. But I warn you--this is your very last chance. I have given you three more days before the agreement goes into effect." This type of generosity was characteristic of Hitler. Seven months later, after placating Chamberlain by extending his ultimatum to Czechoslovakia by three days, he flattered the Prime Minister with what was, of course, a white lie: "You are the only man to whom I have ever made a concession." (WB 137)

At any rate, Schuschnigg agreed to sign. At once the atmosphere became easier. They chatted almost casually. "I would gladly spare the world another war," Hitler remarks, "but I don't know whether it can be avoided if no one believes me." Later, turning to von Papen, Hitler reminisced: "In the decisive hour of 1933, you saved the Reich from chaos by making it possible that the controls were placed in my hands. . ."

"Indeed my Fuehrer". "I shall never forget it, Herr von Papen." Indeed, Hitler had been thinking of the German Ambassador only recently. A previous plan had been to manufacture a pretext for the Austrian legions in Germany to march into Austria to put down the "Red Menace." The provocation planned, Hitler had in mind was to assassinate von Papen. The deadline for this had been January 30, 1938: just two weeks earlier. After Austrian police (tipped



off by von Papen) arrested the conspirators in January, breaking up the plot, Von Papen's suggestion that Schuschnigg be invited to Berchtesgaden and blackmailed was welcomed. (Schuman, Europe on the Eve, 322)

Finally the documents were ready, and Schuschnigg signed. They declined Hitler's invitation to stay for supper. On the ride back to Salzburg the Austrians were quiet but von Papen was again in good spirits. "Well, now you have seen what the Fuehrer can be like at times," he said. "But the next time I am sure it will be different. You know the Fuehrer can be absolutely charming."

"The next time!" Schuschnigg was thinking to himself.

What has come to be called the Anschluss <sup>with</sup> Austria, came a month later; but for Schuschnigg the decisive moment had passed. As Schuschnigg had said, his signature alone was not conclusive; and President Miklas at first refused to give Seyss-Inquart control over police and army. None of the cabinet doubted what the effect of that would be on Austria. Miklas was free, as Schuschnigg pointed out, to accept Schuschnigg's resignation, call a new Chancellor and ignore the Berchtesgaden commitment. No commitment for Austria was, or could have been, extorted at the Berghof; and Hitler had made no commitment. Was von Papen wrong, then, when he had said that the meeting could not be to the disadvantage of the Austrian government: that at worst, things would end up exactly as they were? What, after all, had changed?

What had happened that, in the end, after those days of delay, led Miklas to accept Schuschnigg's advice and sign an agreement they all believed would be fatal? Precisely that Schuschnigg had come to believe, and to communicate his belief, that the alternative to compliance was invasion. To this belief, every gesture, every word Hitler spoke, every detail in the day long charade had contributed. What had changed at Berchtesgaden, what perhaps could not

have been changed so decisively at any other place, in any other way, were Schuschnigg's expectations. "It is true," he reflected later, "that Berchtesgaden was not so much an agreement as a simple case of political blackmail, and had I known that in advance I would never have gone there." Having gone there, his decisions and all his advocacy henceforth must inescapably reflect what he had seen and heard there. That could not be undone.

His new beliefs, incidentally, were not at all mistaken. If Hitler had bluffed at the Rhineland, he was not bluffing now. If he lied, it was only in pretending that invasion--which he was perfectly prepared to use as a second-best alternative--involved no costs or risks for him. As Hitler stated two weeks later to his Austrian Nazi visitors: "He did not now desire a solution by violent means, if it could at all be avoided, since the danger for us in the field of foreign policy became less each year and our military power greater." (B 388).

In this first exercise in blackmail, he was more cautious than he was later: he made a "relatively light" demand. With each success, he saw the risks of failure as much less, therefore committed himself more fully; his threats became more massive; and of his victims he demanded no less than immediate, unresisting acceptance of military occupation. Of Austria he asked, at first, only the slow-death of independence.

It was Schuschnigg's fault that the end came sooner. By March, with Nazi terrorism growing and Seyss-Inquart becoming more and more independent, Schuschnigg decided on a last attempt to undercut German influence. He announced a plebescite for Sunday, the 13th of March, in which the Austrian people would declare whether they were in favor of a free and independent Austria. Hitler learned of this on Wednesday; on Thursday he issued the orders to invade the day before the plebescite: Saturday, March 12.



He was concerned over Mussolini's reaction; Italy was annoyed about the Berchtesgaden agreement and showed some signs of reestablishing relations with England. On the 10th Hitler sent Prince Philip of Hesse to Mussolini with a personal letter explaining his new move and promising to preserve the Brenner frontier. One problem remained: the plate-glass window. It still would not do to heave a brick through it. Along with his operation orders, Hitler laid his plans to ensure that the door would be opened quietly to him, the burglar alarm shut off: by the only men who could do it, the Chancellor and President of Austria.

At five-thirty on the morning of Friday, March 11, Schuschnigg was awakened by a telephone call from the Chief of Police, who told him that the German border at Salzburg had been closed and railroad traffic stopped. Later he learned that the German divisions in Munich had been mobilized, their presumable destination, Austria. In the street outside his office he heard the sound trucks announcing his plebescite. At nine-thirty he received Seyss-Inquart, returning from the airport with Glaise-Horstenau, an Austrian Cabinet Minister who had spent the night in Berlin. Seyss-Inquart bore orders from Goering; the plebescite was to be cancelled immediately; instead, another plebescite was to be announced for two weeks later. If Goering did not receive an answer within one hour he would assume that Seyss-Inquart had been prevented from telephoning and would act accordingly. Schuschnigg called the President and talked with the Chief of Police, who told him that since the amnesty and Seyss-Inquart's regime the government could no longer rely on its police forces.

At eleven-thirty, Schuschnigg informed Seyss-Inquart that the plebescite would be postponed. In fifteen minutes Seyss-Inquart was back. He read Goering's reply from a notebook:

The situation can only be saved if the Austrian Chancellor resigns immediately and if Dr. Seyss-Inquart is appointed Chancellor within two hours. If these conditions are not fulfilled, the German armies will move on Austria. (S 46)

There was a silence. Schuschnigg picked up the telephone and put in a call to Mussolini. Then he went to the office of the President to resign.

The men in that office were furious in their indignation. "Remember Belgium . . . it resisted as long as it could." "Appeal to the masses . . . Mobilize the army. Let us fight to the last man." "Ask for help in London-- in Paris, Rome." "What about the League of Nations?"

To Schuschnigg, at this moment these suggestions seemed "Impossible . . . hopeless, senseless". "It was understandable that powerless fury and boiling excitement would obstruct cold, clear thinking." (46) Law and order, international morals, treaties were out the window. Hitler was right; no one was going to move. The treaty with Italy? As he talked to the President a message came from the Foreign Office: "The Italian government declares that it could give no advice under these circumstances in case such advice would be asked for." France? There was a cabinet crisis in Paris; France was that day without a government. "There was only one thing to do. Think clearly, coolly, retain one's self-control, and act with realism to save what could be saved of our country." (S 47) The Nazi ultimatum had succeeded: with Schuschnigg. But the door to Austria had one more lock; and not even Schuschnigg could pry it open. At 5:30 Seyss-Inquart was on the phone to Goering, in Berlin, with totally unexpected news; the President had denounced the Berchtesgaden agreement and was stubbornly refusing to appoint Seyss-Inquart Chancellor.

Silence in Berlin; then Goering gives new orders.



Listen. . . go immediately together with our military attache, Lt. General Muff, to the President, and inform him that if he does not accept our demands, then and there--you know what the demands are--then the troops which are already poised all along the borders will march, and Austria will have ceased to exist . . . Tell him also that we are not joking. . . If we are in possession of the report that you have been appointed Chancellor by seven-thirty p.m. the marching orders will be stopped, and the troops will remain on our side of the border . . . let the National Socialists go to town throughout the country. Call them out on the streets everywhere . . . If Miklas could not understand the situation in four hours, he'll understand it now in four minutes." (S 304)

But Miklas still refused. "I see that everyone deserts me now," he said to Schuschnigg bitterly as the Chancellor resigned. The Chancellery halls were filling with Nazis, with swastika armbands; outside the Nazis were rioting in the streets. Schuschnigg became convinced they must act quickly or the rabble would throw them bodily from the Chancellery; but he could not persuade Miklas to yield. "You all desert me now, all of you," the President said. (51)

The bad news got to Goering at 6:30. The President "won't do it." Goering: "Well, then, Seyss-Inquart will have to depose him . . . I will give marching orders to the troops within five minutes." Seyss-Inquart on the line (the transcripts of these telephone calls were found by the Allies in the Chancellery in Berlin, in 1945): (Reproduced in Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 297-314) "The President has not yet changed his mind "

Goering: "Now listen here: I am willing to wait for another few minutes . . . If things don't happen within that time you will have to take over by force, all right?" (306)

Just before eight, Schuschnigg begins a broadcast to the Austrian people. He announces his resignation, and tells the world that the German news broadcasts claiming riots and disorder in Austria were lies.

The President has asked me to tell the people of Austria that he has yielded only to force . . . And so I take leave of the Austrian people with a German word of farewell uttered from the depths of my heart: 'God protect Austria.' (Schuman, 328)

The Austrian national anthem followed in the tempo of a funeral march; then the opening bars of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. And then the voice of Seyss-Inquart, announcing that he considered himself still in office and responsible for the maintenance of peace and order. Any resistance to the German Army, should it eventually march into Austria, was "completely out of the question " (Oswald Dutch, "Thus Died Austria, London, 1938. p. 217) The announcement is repeated ten times during the evening.

But the job is not over. In Berlin that evening a thousand guests *have* gathered at a party given by Goering; the State Opera and Ballet are to perform. The invitations <sup>were</sup> for ten. But at eleven Goering's place at the central table is still empty. The host is on the telephone.

8:30 Goering to General Muff: "The best would be if Miklas would resign himself."

Muff: "Well, that he will not do. We just had a very dramatic scene. I talked to him for about fifteen minutes and he declared that he would not yield to force no matter what, and that he would not appoint a new cabinet."

Goering: "Oh--so he won't yield to force?"

Muff: "He won't yield to force."

Goering: "Well, what does he mean? Will he be ousted bodily?"

Muff: "Yes, I guess he will just stay put."

Goering: "All right . . . It's all right by me. Tell Seyss that he is to take over the government." 307-08



8:48 Goering is told that Miklas refuses to do anything whatever.

Goering: "Listen--Seyss is to send the following telegram to us. Take it down: 'The provisional Austrian government, which after the resignation of the Schuschnigg cabinet sees its duty in the reestablishment of law and order in Austria, urgently asks the German government to assist them in this task and to help them to avoid bloodshed. It therefore asks the German government to send German troops into Austria as quickly as possible.'"

More instructions: then he closes:

All right. And he is to send the telegram as soon as possible. And tell him also that we would like . . . He does not really have to send the telegram. He only has to say that he did. You get me? All right then. You will call me about this either at the Fuehrer's or at my place. Now get going. Heil Hitler!"

9:54 General Bodenschatz from Berlin to Keppler: "I need the telegram very urgently."

Keppler: "Tell the Generalfeldmarschall that Seyss-Inquart says it is OK."

Bodenschatz: "That's wonderful. Thank you very much. So Seyss-Inquart says that it is OK."

Keppler: "Yes." 309

At 1025 Prince Philip of Hesse called Hitler from Rome. Presented with the fait accompli, Mussolini sends his best regards; "he took the news very well indeed."

Hitler's reaction to this indicates well how much he felt he had at stake. "Please tell Mussolini that I shall never forget this."

Hesse: "Yes, mein Fuehrer."

Hitler: "Never, never, never. Come what may . . . Once the Austrian thing is out of the way I am ready to go with Mussolini through thick and thin, it's all the same to me now . . .

Hesse: "Yes, mein Fuehrer."

Hitler: "And listen--sign any agreement he would like. I feel no longer in that terrible position which we faced only a short while ago, militarily, I mean, in case I might have got into a conflict. You can tell him again: I thank him most heartily. I will never forget him for that' I will never forget him!"

Hesse: "Yes, mein Fuehrer."

Hitler: "Come what may--oh, I will never forget him. Whenever he should be in need, or in danger, he can be sure that I will stick with him, rain or shine . . . come what may . . . and if the whole world would rise against him. I will, I shall . . ."

Hesse: "Yes, mein Fuehrer." (310)

Goering was now free to join his guests; the party could begin. But Goering's work was still not quite through. Italy would not march; but what of England, France, Czechoslovakia? The British Ambassador greeted him coldly. In his seat, Goering wrote a message on his program: "Immediately the music is over I should like to talk to you, and will explain everything to you." (B 394); he tossed it to Henderson across the wife of the American Ambassador. (WB 26) Later in Goering's private room, he found Henderson outraged; but the British would not fight.

All day there had been rumours in Berlin and Prague that the Czechs might mobilize; if they did, they might drag the French with them. The Czech minister, when he arrived at the party, was shown direct to Goering's room. (Note: this was actually before G. joined guests) "I give you my word of honour," Goering told him, "that Czechoslovakia has nothing to fear from the Reich." Would the Czechs mobilize? The Minister retired to consult with his



government; later he returned with assurances that the Czechs would not.

(WB 26)

Just before midnight, President Miklas yielded. To avoid bloodshed, to maintain some degree of independence (for Seyss-Inquart expected to head a Nazi government in a nominally independent Austria), he named Seyss-Inquart Chancellor. At 2 General Muff called Berlin and relayed Seyss-Inquart's request that the troops be halted at the frontier. The answer: the occupation must go on. (B 393) It began in the early~~ing~~ morning of March 12, 1938: 21 years ago today.

In the course of that day, as General Jodl later testified, 70% of the German tanks and cars had broken down; they clogged the road from Salzburg to Vienna. (B 396) It was, it turned out, even more helpful than Hitler had imagined that the burgler alarm had been turned off; not a minute of the fury at Berchtesgaden, the frantic telephoning, had been wasted. The shortest resistance by the Austrians might not only have eliminated the ambiguities of the situation and increased tenfold the chances of intervention, involvement--no matter how reluctant--by the other Powers in Europe; it would have focussed disastrous publicity on the unreadiness of the German war machine. Hitler was furious. But when Seyss-Inquart presented him on the night of the 13th with a proclamation that began: "Austria is a province of the German Reich," Hitler was moved to tears. He told his companions: "Yes, a good political action saves blood." (B 396)

In Austria, the Jews and political enemies of Hitler were caught without an hour to flee. A wave of suicides began, followed by looting and vandalism. In Vienna alone there were, eventually, 76,000 arrests.

On March 14, Neville Chamberlain, summarized the recent events in the House of Commons. He noted, with considerable suspicion, the claims of the

German Foreign Minister that talk of a German ultimatum was "pure imagination." "As a matter of fact," Neurath had written Henderson, "the question of the dispatch of military and police forces from the Reich was first raised by the fact that the newly formed Austrian Government addressed to the Government of the Reich a telegram which has already been published in the press, an urgent request . . . Faced with the directly threatening danger of a bloody civil war in Austria, the Government of the Reich decided to meet the appeal then addressed to it." (Dutch, 239) Chamberlain reported that, in accordance with earlier commitments to consult with the French and Italian Governments in the event that Austrian independence should be threatened, England had consulted them. The French, like the English, had lodged the strongest protests and condemnation, against such "use of coercion, backed by force." This use of violent methods must have "a damaging influence upon general confidence in Europe." "The immediate result," Chamberlain concluded, "must be to intensify the sense of uncertainty and insecurity in Europe." (Dutch, 241)

But the coercion had been successful. The condemnation, on the other hand, was not; and in the end, the "lack of confidence," the "sense of uncertainty and insecurity" were not to Hitler's disadvantage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hitler felt he had been cheated at Munich. Indeed, we can measure the influence of Chamberlain's threats on that outcome by Hitler's pique at the thought he had been bluffed. ~~Comment:~~ "That fellow has spoiled my entry into Prague," Hitler told Schacht on his return from Munich; and he set out to recoup. Next time there would be no summit conferences, to waste time: or to frighten Hitler's generals with talk of war, to tempt them--and him--with peaceful, riskless rewards. This time there would be a quick, military



victory: the total subjugation of Czechoslovakia for which he had lusted since May of '38.

Still, there was the problem of the plate-glass window. This time the vulnerable point in the alarm system<sup>was</sup>, not so clearly England and France; they were not likely again to hold their ally down and stifle her protests while he operated. There must be no cries of protest, no unruly disturbance to challenge them to fulfill their commitment. As in the Anschluss, a fait accompli required that the occupation be fast and quiet; and both of these requirements indicated: there must be no resistance at all. <sup>A</sup> ~~An~~ unresisted occupation would call for large-scale mobilization, which might alert the Allies. As in Austria, the Wehrmacht could bring victory, over its single adversary; but the Wehrmacht alone could not guarantee a victory without resistance, without outcries, without delaying actions: and without that, without a method of entry that would shut off the burglar alarm and dull the allies' reflexes, the Wehrmacht could not promise victory at all. ¶ For this job, Hitler had his "intellectual weapons". Now, having tested them in Austria, he trusted them enough to schedule in his military plans a scant few hours for the decisive coercion of the Czechoslovak head of state. This would seem to be cutting it fine; though at this point in our story, we might well be wary of criticizing Hitler's judgment in matters of blackmail. To create the necessary impression in such a short time, of course, a personal audience was essential. So, on the afternoon of March 14, the army being ready to move, the Czechs were informed that the presence of President Hacha and the Foreign Minister, Chvalkovsky, was desired in Berlin.

Hacha took the journey with his daughter as nurse and companion. He was an old man, older than his years, and in bad health. As he told the Fuehrer at the opening of their interview, he had been an unknown person until

recently, a judicial official in the Viennese civil service; he had never dabbled in politics. Outside of his job, he was known only for having translated Kipling's Jungle Tales into Czech.

In his last hours as a head of state, Hacha received all honours due him. A guard of Honour awaited, to be inspected by him, at the station; and Ribbentrop was present, with a bouquet of flowers for his daughter. At the Adlon Hotel, an aide presented to the daughter a box of chocolates, with the compliments of the Fuehrer. (Henderson, 216-17) Chvalkovsky held a preliminary conference with Ribbentrop, after which he assured Hacha that nothing drastic was in the offing. Finally, at one o'clock in the morning, after his long journey, the old man was called to the Reichschancellery for his audience. In the courtyard, he and Chvalkovsky were welcomed by a company of the SS bodyguard, whose band played the regimental march. Hacha inspected the guard. (Schmidt, p. 123)

Then the Czechs entered the presence of Hitler, who was attended by Goering, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Weizsacker, and others. On the table in front of Hitler were documents for signing.

Hitler's interpreter, Paul Schmidt, describes the setting: "The dark panelling of the room, lighted only by a few bronze lamps, produced a sinister atmosphere--suitable framework for the tragic scene of that night." (122)

Hacha began, one must say, weakly. (ND: 2798-PS) He thanked the Fuehrer for receiving him; he had long wanted, he said, to meet the man whose wonderful ideas he had often read and followed. (Everyone sits down? the German minute notes at this point.) He went on to deprecate himself and the goals of Czechoslovakia; he shed no tears, he assured the Fuehrer, over Slovakia, which had just that day proclaimed its independence (at the instigation of Hitler). However, he believed the Fuehrer "would understand him when he expressed his



opinion that Czechoslovakia had the right to wish to live her own national life"--on "the friendliest terms with Germany," of course. This was all that he wanted to say.

Then Hitler spoke. He was sorry, he said, to have had to ask the President to undertake this journey; but he had reached the conclusion that the trip might prove of great service to his country, "since Germany's attack was only a matter of hours." He launched into a diatribe against the spirit of Benes that still stalked in Czechoslovakia. He cited provocations? (that day the German press was reporting the same atrocities against Germans in Czechoslovakia that had been described at the time of Munich: the student beaten, the pregnant woman thrown down and trampled, etc.). E.g., "why had Czechoslovakia not reduced her army to a reasonable size? Now "for me the die was cast." He had issued the order for German troops to march, and to incorporate Czechoslovakia into the German Reich.

Hacha and Chvalkovsky, Schmidt wirtes, "sat as though turned to stone while Hitler spoke. Only their eyes showed that they were alive." "It must have been an extraordinarily heavy blow to learn from Hitler's mouth that the end of their country had come." (124)

But why had they been brought to hear this? The invasion would begin at 6 a.m. that morning: in five hours. There were, said Hitler, "two possibilities." The first was that the invasion of the German troops might develop into a battle. This resistance would then be broken down by force of arms with all available means. The other was that the entry of the German troops should take place in a peaceable manner, and then it would be easy for the Fuehrer. . . to give to Czechoslovakia an individual existence on a generous scale, autonomy and a certain amount of national freedom."

It was simply up to the Czechs; if they did resist, the punishment would be automatic; indeed, it would be out of Hitler's hands.

If, tomorrow, it came to a fight. . . in two days the Czech army would cease to exist. Some Germans would, of course, also be killed, and this would produce a feeling of hatred which would compel him, from motives of self-preservation, to refuse any longer to grant autonomy. The world would not care a jot about this.

This invitation was the last good deed he would be able to render to the Czech people. If it came to fighting, then the bloodshed would compel us to hate also. But perhaps Hacha's visit might avert the worst.

The hours were passing. At 6 o'clock the troops would march in. He felt almost ashamed to say that, for every Czech battalion, a German division would come. The military operation was not a trifling one, but had been planned on a most generous scale.

But how, in any case, asked Hacha, could it be arranged within four hours to hold back the entire Czech nation from offering resistance. The Fuehrer advised him to telephone Prague. "It might be a great decision, but he could see the possibility dawning of a long period of peace between the two nations. Should the decision be otherwise, he could foresee the annihilation of Czechoslovakia."

Hacha asks whether the whole purpose of the invasion is to disarm the Czech army. This might, perhaps be done in some other way.

The Fuehrer says that his decision is irrevocable. Everyone knows what a decision by the Fuehrer means. He could see no other practical method of disarmament, and asks the others present whether they agree with him, which they confirm. The only possibility of disarming the Czech army would be by the German army.

~~For~~ For Hacha the path he was taking today was the most difficult in his life, but he believed that in a few years' time this decision would be regarded as understandable and in 50 years probably as a fortunate one.

Hitler signed the documents <sup>2nd</sup> left the room. The Czechs were closeted alone with Goering and Ribbentrop. On this discussion the German minute is tactfully silent: but details emerge, secondhand, from the dispatches of Henderson and



Coulondre, and from Schmidt's account. Schmidt's job was to contact Prague, so that the President could send his crucial instructions to a cabinet meeting then in session. But at this moment the telephone line to Prague was out of order. "A nervy Ribbentrop told me to find out 'who's gone and let us down.'" All Schmidt could find was that Prague did not answer. "'Call the Postmaster-General at once, for me personally,' screamed Ribbentrop, scarlet with rage. I redoubled my efforts, with the knowledge that failure to get through might cost many lives." (123-24)

And inside the room, Hacha and Chvalkovsky had come at last to life. They turned from the documents and refused to sign. "If we should sign those documents," they said, "we would be for ever cursed by our people."

But the Germans pursued them around the table, thrusting the documents before them and pressing pens into their hands, shouting "Sign! If you refuse, half Prague will lie in ruins from aerial bombardment within two hours." (2943-PS, No. 77)

"I have nothing at all against your beautiful city," Goering told Hacha. "However, if you want to do anything at all against the decision of the Fuehrer, especially if you should attempt to get help from the West, then I shall be forced to show the world the 100 percent effectiveness of my Air Force." (3061-PS, No. 4)

A warning example for England and France: there was the motive, only too believable, for the action Goering threatened. "Sign!" Goering ordered; hundreds of bombers waited only for his signal; the signal would be given at six, if the signatures were refused; the life of Prague was at stake.

Outside Schmidt was dialling; Ribbentrop had told him to "get the Postmaster-General out of his bed," snarling at "Ministers who sleep during such a situation while we're hard at work here."

Suddenly there was a commotion; Goering was shouting for Professor Morell, Hitler's personal physician, who had been detailed to stand by. "'Hacha has fainted!' said Goering with great agitation, 'I hope nothing happens to him.' He added thoughtfully: 'It has been a very strenuous day for such an old man.'"

"'If anything happens to Hacha,' I thought, 'the whole world will say tomorrow that he was murdered at the Chancellery.'" (125) And, though Schmidt knew little of this, more was at stake than world public opinion. Hacha was revived by Morell, with injections. He continued to resist; fainted again, and was revived again. But if he had fainted once too often; if the telephone line to Prague had stayed out three more hours: Hitler would have lost his gamble. With the burglar alarm unsilenced, with resistance starting in Czechoslovakia, even in an unorganized way, the Second World War might have started in March of 1939. Those were the risks Hitler was running when he allowed himself five hours to disconnect the detonator.

At 3:55 Hacha signed the documents. He called Prague, Schmidt finally having gotten through, and ordered that there should be no resistance. There was a final conference with Hitler, who assured him "We do not desire nor do we intend de-nationalization. They, on one hand, shall live as Czechs, and we wish to live contentedly as Germans." Germany and Czechoslovakia would be one economic unit, Goering told them; in addition, Czechoslovakia would get orders which would certainly double her production.

Here and there, the Germans concluded, there might be clashes where Hacha's message had not gotten through, but by and large, they could count on an entry without opposition. The agreement that the Czechs signed told the world:



The conviction was expressed on both sides that all endeavours must be directed to securing tranquility, order and peace in that part of Central Europe. The President of the State of Czecho-Slovakia has declared that, in order to serve this aim and final pacification, he confidently lays the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Guhrer of the German Reich. The Fuehrer has accepted this declaration, and has announced his decision to take the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich, and to accord it the autonomous development of its national life in accordance with its special characteristics. Schmidt, 125-26.

Later, when the British and French called to file protests, Weizsacker reports, "I called attention to Hacha's signature." (Memoirs, 177) It was not the document, of course, but the speed of the occupation, unresisted on Hacha's orders, that stayed the hands of the Allies: until too late. Only two days later, in his speech at Birmingham, Chamberlain made his spectacular about-face in his evaluation of Hitler; but by then, he could only resolve not to be caught next time. If segments of the 40 Czech divisions had still been fighting when Chamberlain prepared that speech--and even Hitler had predicted they could hold out that long--what action might the Allies have taken? <sup>P</sup> One thing is sure: Hitler did not care to find out. And, as he read the document that lay before him at 4 in the morning, March 15, with the signatures of Hacha and Chvalkovsky, he knew he would not find out. <sup>P</sup> The next day, flying to Prague, <sup>Hitler</sup> he arrived before Hacha. That night he sat at last in the Palace of the Kings of Bohemia, at the table where Benes had once sat, and wrote the proclamation: "Czechoslovakia has ceased to exist." <sup>P</sup> The Wilhelmplatz was still dark as <sup>Hacha and Chvalkovsky</sup> they left the Chancellery, two hours before the invasion. "Our people will curse us," said Chvalkovsky, "and yet we have saved their existence. We have preserved them from a horrible massacre." (2943-PS, No. 77)

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Should Hacha and Chvalkovsky have resisted? Hitler was not bluffing. The bombers were loaded. ~~(Denmark)~~ Should Hacha and Chvalkovsky have chosen the destruction of Prague: to light a fire that might alert the British and French to their own danger? Those who believe that there can be no temptations to peaceful surrender in the world of today and tomorrow will no doubt find ~~that~~ the Czech's' decision should have been easy: and other than it was.